



**The Challenges and Prospects of Textbook Acquisition in PHEIs: The Views of  
College Administrators**

by  
**Wondwosen Tamrat (Asst. Prof.)**

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## ***The Challenges and Prospects of Textbook Acquisition in PHEIs: The Views of College Administrators***

Wondwosen Tamrat (Asst. Prof.)

President, St. Mary's College, P.O. Box 18490, Email: smcmera@telecom.net.et, Addis Ababa

### **Abstract**

Textbooks remain an important element of knowledge creation and ownership. That is why the book industry is regarded as the bedrock in the promotion of literacy and education, and the book itself central to education and development (Darko - Ampem 2000). Though the importance of books for education and development is well-established, the situation of textbook acquisition in developing countries is fraught with problems.

This small research was designed to investigate the views of college principals and library heads of Ethiopian PHEIs with regard to the problems related to textbook acquisition. The study was made on 34 private colleges both in the capital and in the Administrative Regions. The findings indicate that currently PHEIs have a limited resource of books. The acquisition process is highly demanding and at times frustrating. Books are expensive; and in some cases unavailable on the local market. Acquiring books from abroad has not been an easy matter for PHEIs. As the demand for textbooks will undoubtedly rise in the future with the expansion of both public and private HEIs, it is imperative that the country develops a national book policy that governs the development, printing and dissemination of books. Moreover, the mechanisms for encouraging and supporting the growth of local publishing industry should be sought. The needed support for private higher education institutions in assisting their efforts of acquiring books both locally and from abroad should be rendered. In addition to allocating a significant portion of their income to the acquisition of books, PHEIs should also create resource sharing mechanisms among themselves and/or public institutions of higher learning in order to share the existing meagre resources, experiences and expertise in the area.

### ***I. Introduction***

#### ***1.1 Background***

In the last six years private higher education has shown a remarkable growth in Ethiopia. It is now regarded as a rapidly expanding part of Ethiopia's higher education system increasing by 40% in between 1999 and 2002 alone (World Bank 2003).

In the current quest for rapid national growth, private providers constitute an essential component of the governments' higher education expansion strategy with an increasing role to be ascribed to them in the future (Cf. ESDP II 2002/02 - 2004/05).

In order for private higher education to grow, policies that promote its proliferation are not the only thing that matter. Among other things, the availability of facilities that are needed for the

sector are factors that need to be considered. This research identifies one such factor i.e., the availability of textbooks as one of the essential ingredients of the workings of private colleges.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The research is an exploratory survey that aims at investigating:

- a) the current status of private higher education institutions in terms of the type and volume of books they have;
- b) major problems in the efforts of PHEIs to acquire books and strategies used to cope with the problems; and
- c) the elements that PHEIs view as solutions to the existing problems.

### **1.3 Design of the Study**

This study was made on private colleges both in the capital and the Administrative Regions. Thirty five PHEIs participated in the study. Among the private colleges studied, two focused exclusively on medicine, 2 on technical training and the rest offered a combination of business, law, IT and Teacher Education.

Two types of questionnaire were set for college administrators and library heads. The questions focused on eliciting responses on the objectives set earlier. Four publishers (Mega, Shama PLC, Macmillan Publishers, OUP) were also given an open-ended questionnaire to elicit responses on the publishing business in general and PHEIs in particular.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Book Situation in Developing Countries**

In developing countries in general, and in Africa in particular, books assume centre stage due to their accessibility, approachability and the tendency to sustain a lasting impression on their audience (Saunders 1996). The importance of books for development is also a well-established fact. In the debates on developing economies, improving education has been considered the key to a better life (Askerud 1998). Among those concerned with improving education, there has never been disagreement on the fact that books are the primary tool (Ibid). Zeleza argues,

Books and libraries are not a developmental luxury but are essential, especially in our so-called information age where knowledge and information have acquired the materiality of capital and commodities, whose uneven accumulation dictates the wealth and poverty of countries, communities and classes (N.D.: 1)

Although the role ascribed for books is very high, the situation in developing countries is distressing. A UNESCO report in Evans (N.D.) notes that despite the phenomenal increase in world book production, the demand in developing countries remains unfulfilled.

In terms of book production, Africa rates very low. With the exception of Egypt, South Africa, and to a lesser extent Nigeria and Kenya, African nations produce few books and their publishing industries are largely limited to textbooks for schools (Darko-Ampem 2000). As noted by Limb (2001) and Land (2002) Africa imports 70% of its book needs; produces 1- 2% of the global output of books; and exports less than 5% of its total output. Over 80% of total book production in the world remains scattered in about 34 industrialized countries, which represent only 30% of the world's population (UNESCO Report in Evans: N.D.)

With the growth and expansion of education at various levels, the problems are obviously set to continue. Altbach and Rathgeber note, "The challenges are even greater where higher education has expanded because large numbers of different books are needed to supply diverse student populations" (1980 Page No. ).

### ***2.2 Factors That Impede the Growth of the Book Industry***

Though the demand for a vibrant book industry is high in developing countries, this demand has not been met due to several reasons. Some of the major factors are related to low levels of literacy and reading cultures, shortage of capital and skills, poor marketing and distribution infrastructures including libraries, and prevalence of repressive or unfavourable state policies (Zezeza: N.D).

In an environment where literacy and reading culture are at a dismal rate, the book industry cannot be expected to grow easily. In Africa, less than 5% of the population constitutes active readers and demand for books has generally been limited to small elite (Land 2002; Askerud 1998). For many people in Africa, reading is associated with utilitarian purposes and is not regarded as a leisure activity (Altbach and Rathgeber 1980).

With very little disposable income, readers in Africa cannot also buy the books they need due to the unaffordable cost of books. Shortage of capital and skills also abounds in those who would like to involve in the publishing industry.

Like book publishing the financial risks of book distribution are big. Inefficiencies in distribution, accompanied by such factors as the lack of adequate bibliographic control, inadequate publicity, and the tender system are common problems for book sellers (Altbach and Rathgeber: Ibid).

Though some governments have offered their assistance to the proliferation of the book industry, in many African states government neglect is regarded as the major feature and continues to be a significant reason for the very slow progress of book development industry or project.

Both in Africa and elsewhere book development projects require concerted efforts and policies to counter current problems. Below are discussed factors that assist the development of the book industry.

### ***2.3 Practices that Allow the Development of the Book Industry***

#### ***1. National Book Policies***

One of the measures that need to be taken in the development of the book industry is the promulgation of policies which promote this objective. Experience in both developed and developing countries has shown that a national book policy that governs the development, printing and dissemination of books while providing a favourable condition for publishing industries is needed (Askerud 1996). Sow identifies the importance of such a policy as follows:

A national book policy will ... clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned with the book sector: government (national education, finance, culture, communication, etc), private sector (publishers, printers, and distributors), NGOs and donors. In addition, it will define the place of materials in national languages, and promotional strategies for them, at the same time as providing a logical framework for collaboration between partners in the public and private sectors (1998:3).

As argued by Land a national policy also allows "the development of reading and writing skills; supports the development of a diverse community of writers; develops skills of people required by the book sector; improves sectoral co-ordination so as to grow the book sector as one of Africa's economic and cultural industries" (2002:16). This requires policy considerations for different sectors involved in the development of the book industry. That is, policies are needed for authors, publishers, the printing and production sector, the trade and distribution sector, etc. It is to be noted that "the formulation of a national book policy should be part of a national plan based on co-operation among government developments that would enable the publishing industry to shift from its bias towards and reliance on the school book trade towards a form which could make a more general contribution to growth and development" (Land 2002:16).

Evans suggests that in order to put such policies into practice, a national book development agency is needed being charged with implementing and improving the book development policy. Land (2002) also proposes an independent coordinating body funded by both the state and private sector that would have a mandate and the necessary credibility to bring together all stakeholders first in the process of generating policies with wide acceptance, and secondly in monitoring their implementation.

Cognizant of the advantages of such a policy, countries like Tanzania, Ghana, Mozambique, Kenya and South Africa have developed book policies to make books more accessible to ordinary people, to shift book provision from the state to the private sector, and to promote local involvement in the book industry. However, many developing countries have not conceived a clear policy regarding the development of the book industry (Darko -Ampem 2000).

## **2. Promoting Local Publishers and Writers**

As argued by Askerud (1998), a literate society is not conceivable without a market-based publishing sector. In the words of Cudworth (1996:1), "The development of a successful and useful publishing industry in Africa depends on a strong internal publishing trade, which will be provided for by indigenous publishers".

In many developing countries, involvement in the publishing industry is not regarded as the first choice of potential investors. As outlined by Altbach and Rathgeber (1980), the profit margins of indigenous publishing houses do not exceed 10%. Because of the large initial capital required, especially when they establish their own print shops, indigenous publishers are reported to experience a high rate of business failure. Furthermore, "Because of the unpredictability of foreign exchange regulations and the vagaries of exchange rates, it is often impossible to control or even realistically predict production costs. It is equally difficult to predict sales income because of limited markets and inadequate distribution systems" (Ibid: 45).

Lack of skill in the form of business training or previous business experience is another problem commonly observed in third world publishers. This is "a particularly serious problem in countries that do not have an infrastructure of managerial support services - accounting firms, marketing agencies, and so on - that could much - needed expertise" (Ibid: 46).

The growth of local publishers is highly dependent on the support they get from the government. However, this has not been the case in Africa. Darko-Ampem (2000) argues that government neglect of the area is one of the significant factors for the slow progress of book development industry in Africa. According to Faye (1998) support for the publishing infrastructure is generally negligible; and very little is given in terms of incentives such as tax concessions, book studies and subsidies. In similar vein, Sow (1998:3) notes, "There have been very few institutional measures to facilitate publishing, nor has there been much concern towards encouraging writers, providing banking concessions or tax relief for imports, price regulation ..."

In order to promote growth in the book industry, it is thus imperative that governments should assist the efforts of local publishers. Evans (N.D.:3) suggests, "Assistance in directing publishers towards the various funding alternatives needs to be given. Another possibility is for education of

national banking interests in the rather unusual circumstances of the book business. Tax relief for the endeavour of publishers ... should also be applied."

Governments in many developing economies are thus faced with the challenge of developing the industry and a market. In addition to those measures cited above, such a task requires addressing issues such as lack of editorial skills, paper shortage, equipment deficiencies or distribution (Askerud 1998). As outlined by Evans (p.3), while journalism courses exist, courses for book sellers, publishers, editors, designers, translators are rare in developing countries. Governments could offer fellowships, grants for travel and research in this area. A system of providing subsidy for advertising books could also be introduced. With a non-existent or limited assistance from the government it is very unlikely that the book industry will develop.

### **3. Book Promotion Activities**

It is to be noted that the ultimate goal of developing literate societies cannot be attained only by addressing the issue of textbooks to the education sector. If people are to stay literate, they must continue reading throughout their adult lives (Askerud 1998). This does not require book development projects related to schools alone. It rather calls for the development of reading culture in the community. Among other things, this could be done through a variety of book promotion activities that are carried out in a sustainable and continuous manner.

According to Askerud, such activities should address themselves to making people read outside of school; generating a general desire for books; creating appreciation of books; and persuading people and governments to spend money on books in preference to other commodities (1998:6). Book fairs are one of the most common activities that are organized to promote book publishing activities and to encourage reading. Though rare in Africa, Darko-Ampem (2000) notes that book fairs in Africa have been held since the mid-1970s with the Ife Book Fair of 1973 as the first in Nigeria and that of Ghana in 1977. The first Nairobi book fair in Africa - The annual Zimbabwe International Book Fair - was held for the first time in 1983. The first Ethiopian Book Festival was also held from June 3 - 5, 2004 this year.

The additional advantage of book fairs is that alongside the book exhibitions activities such as seminars, workshops, cultural events, and commercial transactions take place. For instance, the Southern African Book Development Educational Trust organized a training workshop on the publication of scholarly research for African graduate students at the 1999 Zimbabwe Book Fair (Ibid). The Ethiopian Book Festival also had a conference on publishing in which individuals from the various sectors concerned with publication presented papers and held discussions.

#### **4. Professional Associations**

Professional associations of individuals involved in the book industry is an important element in book development strategies. This is because such associations add to professional efficiency, solidarity and allow exchange of ideas and discussions on professional matters.

As noted above, one of the major advantages of professional associations is the possibility of creating a forum for establishing a meaningful dialogue between different interest groups involved. As argued by Askerud, "Agreeing on a common conceptual framework will enable people that previously could not talk together to do so and to strengthen coordination of the very diverse activities that are needed to boost book sectors" (1998:5). Among other things the establishment of such associations would help to:

- create a co-operative framework for publishing development and book promotion;
- promote reading and a sustainable literate environment;
- instigate the formation of a national book policy (where this does not exist);
- develop training programmes for all branches of the local book industry; and
- facilitate the availability and accessibility of books to as many readers as possible (Sow 1998:3).

Though not in all, allocations are being founded in different parts of Africa. Among such associations are the South African PASA (The Publishers Association of South Africa), The Guinean REPROLIG (The Reseau des Professionnels Guiniens du Livre), and the Kenya KPA (Kenya Publishers Association). The leverage that such institutions have in terms of influencing governments and coordinating national publishing efforts cannot be underestimated. KPA is for instance, cited to have fought and won recognition on the issue of a national book policy in Kenya (Darko -Ampem 2000).

#### **5. Short-term Strategies**

Though the answer to the book development industry resides in long-lasting measures as identified above, countries in Africa should also make use of short-term strategies until there is a vibrant book industry. One such measure is importing books at a reduced price. Experiences with Macmillan and Indian practices could be cited as a case in point.

Macmillan is subsidized by various aid programmes (i.e CODE) on the agreement that a certain number of books go towards Third World education (Saunders 1996). This allows for the reduction of book prices in developing countries.

One of the major problems in the growth of the Indian higher education has been the non-availability of reasonably priced quality books in various fields of studies. In order to solve this problem the Indian government has sought the inexpensive publication in India of foreign books of reference and other standard works. For this purpose an Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, comprising representatives of other ministries (Cf. [http:// Shikshanic. nic. in](http://Shikshanic.nic.in)).

With a similar intention, the government of the UK has also initiated a scheme for the production of low-priced books of reference and standard works for use in India with particular focus to university textbooks. There has also been an offer from the Soviet Government under the Soviet Agreement for Technical Assistance for the development of the Institute of Technology in Bombay to make English translations of Russian books of reference in Science and Technology available, without cost for publication and distribution in India (Ibid).

### **3. Major Findings of the Study**

To reiterate, this research was conducted to identify

- (a) the status- quo in PHEIS with regard to the volume and type of books they have;
- (b) the problems that PHEIS have in acquiring books and the strategies they employ to tackle the problems; and
- (c) the solutions which college administrators view as useful in countering the problems.

The discussions in this section are presented in a manner that answers the above objectives.

#### **3.1 The Volume and Type of Books in PHEIs**

One of the major objectives of this research was to identify the volume and type of books in PHEIs. This was done in order to determine current status and see where PHEIs are.

It was found out that in terms of the number of books available in these sample colleges the least number was 500 while the highest was 30,000. As to the number of titles (type of books available) the least figure reported was 150 whereas the highest is 5,000.

An attempt was made to determine the number of copies on each title available. The following table indicates the results obtained.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Available Number of Books and Available Number of Book Titles in Private Colleges**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Available Number of Books	500.00	30000.00	7977.65	8670.3
Available No of Book Titles	31	5000.00	1297.06	1415.72

**Source: College heads**

The average number of books available in the colleges is 7977.65 while that of available book titles is 1297.06. This indicates that, on average, there are about 6 copies of books on each title with the possibility of serving only six students at a time. It should be observed that the standard deviation for available number of books and available number of book titles among the private colleges is huge indicating that there are tremendous variations among the surveyed private colleges with regard to possessions of books under various book titles.

Having determined the above, an attempt was also made to see how many books would be available to each student. This required information on the total number of students available in each college. On the basis of Education Statistics Annual Abstract (MOE: 2003) it was only possible to determine the figure for four private colleges which stated the number of books they have and for which the data was available in the abstract. The results are shown in the table below. The names of the Colleges have not been cited for the purpose of keeping them anonymous.

The figures shown above do not look encouraging, except for College 3 perhaps. They are also far below the requirements of the Ministry. In the following table, a comparison has been made between the requirements of the Ministry and the current book acquisition of private colleges.

**Table 2. Available Number of Books, Book Titles and Books per Student for Selected Private Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia**

<i>Name of the College</i>	<i>Available Number of Books</i>	<i>Available Number of Book titles</i>	<i>Total Number of Students*</i>	<i>Book per Student</i>
College 1	19,107	2,530	2,953	6.5
College 2	12,119	1,159	2,436	5.0
College 3	18,684	425	858	21.8
College 4	25,000	3,14	2,891	8.6
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>18,725.5</b>	<b>1,782</b>	<b>2,284.5</b>	<b>10.5</b>

\* Total Number of Students is for 2002/03 obtained from Education Statistics Abstract (2003)

Having determined the available number of books and titles in the sample colleges, the researcher was also interested to see how these institutions fare as per the requirements of the MOE. The results are shown below.

**Table 3: Requirements of the Ministry of Education as Compared with Current Acquisition of Books in Private Colleges**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Ministry Requirement</i>		<i>Current Acquisition by PHEIs for both Programs (Average Figure)</i>
	<i>Diploma Program</i>	<i>Degree Program</i>	
No. of Books	10,000	25,000	7977
No. of Titles	5,000	15,000	1297

**Source: MOE Abstract and Accreditation Requirement**

If we consider that all private colleges provide only diploma training, the average number of books available may appear acceptable. However, considering the fact that a number of the sample colleges provide degree level training (which requires 35,000 books on average) the need for more books at the private colleges is very big.

With the problem of availability of books in mind, the sample colleges were further asked to identify the areas of training for which they think it is difficult to acquire books. The results are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Level of Difficulty to Get Books by Subject Areas/Fields of Studies**

Ser. No	Subject Areas	Level of Difficulty					
		Most Difficult		More Difficult		Difficult	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Accounting	5	19.2 (33.3)	4	15.4 (26.7)	6	23.1 (40.0)
2	Management	1	3.8 (7.1)	5	19.2 (35.7)	8	30 (57.1)
3	Law	8	30.8 (72.7)	3	11.5 (27.3)	-	-
4	Marketing	2	7.7 (22.2)	2	19.2 (22.2)	5	19.2 (55.6)
5	Computer Science	3	11.5 (50.0)	3	11.5 (50.0)	-	-
6	Medicine	5	19.2 (100)	-	-	-	-
7	Economics	1	3.8 (50)	-	-	1	3.8 (50)
8	Technical fields	1	3.8 (33.3)	-	-	2	7.1 (66.7)
9	Teaching	-	-	6	23.1 (60)	4	15.4 (40)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

*Remark: Figures in parenthesis are row percentage values*

*Source: Private College heads*

It is observed that the most difficult subject areas to acquire books are Law, Accounting and Medicine, Computer Science and Marketing in that order. As might be further shown in the above table, out of those who described the level of difficulty to get books for Law, 71.4% identified it as the most difficult area. Out of those who described the level of difficulty to get books for Accounting, each of the respondents gave equal weights (33.3%) for all of the three levels of difficulty measurements. Out of those who described the level of difficulty to get books for Computer Science, 66.7% identified it as a "More Difficult" area to get access for library materials. Though responded by few institutions, the fields of medicine and Technical training also seem to have difficulty.

### **3.2. Major Problems of PHEIs in Textbook Acquisition and Coping Strategies**

As has been noted earlier, the second major focus of this research was to see what the private colleges cite as their major problems with regard to book acquisition, and the mechanisms they have used to tackle their problems. Information was extracted from both Library and College heads, supplemented by what has been obtained from publishers and distributors.

To begin with, as the major beneficiaries of books, library heads were asked to identify what they regard as their major problems. The results are shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Major Problems of Private College Libraries (n = 26)**

<b>Ser. No.</b>	<b>Description of Library Problems</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
1	Shortage of Adequate Books in the Library	23	88.5
2	High Cost of Books for Purchase and Shortage of budget for Book Purchase	10	43.5
3	Unavailability of Books in the Market	7	26.9
4	Absence of Internet Service	1	3.8
5	Limited Library Service Hours	2	7.7
6	Problem of Reading Rooms, Tables and Chairs in the Libraries	9	34.6
7	Poor Library Management	7	27

**Source: Library Heads**

It might be seen from the table that shortage of adequate books is the most serious problem, followed by budget shortage and high cost, and unavailability of books in the market. As might be shown in the table, the observation of the library heads go far beyond the areas of this investigation. Issues related to service hours, library management and reading room could be cited as examples.

In order to visualize how college heads view the magnitude of the shortage of adequate books, they were asked to rate the seriousness of the problem on a scale from 'Not at all' to 'To a very great extent.' The results are shown in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Magnitude of Problems of Private Higher Education Libraries (Responses from College Deans)**

S. No.	Problem Description	Description of Magnitude of the Problem									
		To a Very Great Extent		To Great Extent		To Some Extent		To a Limited Extent		Not at All	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Absence of Yearly Budget allocated to the Acquisition of Books in the Colleges	2	7.7	6	23.1	7	26.9	5	19.2	6	23.1
2	Inadequacy of the Budget to the Acquisition	4	15.4	5	19.2	8	30.8	6	23.1	3	11.5
3	The Unavailability of Books for Purchase in the Local Market	13	50.0	9	34.6	3	11.5	1	3.8	-	-
4	The Expensiveness of Available Books in the Market	16	61.5	6	23.1	4	15.4	-	-	-	-
5	Lack of Government Support to Private Colleges in the Acquisition of Textbooks	19	73.1	2	7.7	5	19.2	-	-	-	-
6	Lack of Instructors' Readiness in Producing Materials for their Students	5	19.2	1	42.3	5	19.2	5	19.2	-	-
7	Lack of Instructors Who Prepare Teaching Material	3	11.5	7	26.9	8	30.8	7	26.9	1	3.8
8	Lack of Resource Sharing Practices among Private and Public Institutions	18	69.2	3	11.5	3	11.5	1	3.8	-	-
9	Securing Donation from Local/Foreign Source	12	46.2	6	23.1	3	11.5	2	7.7	2	

**Source: College Heads**

For the college heads, the factors that affect the problem investigated seem to be mainly outside the reach of institutions. As shown in the above table, these factors are: lack of government support, lack of resource sharing practices, and the high cost of books available in the market.

With regard to the availability and cost of books for higher education in the market, the responses given by a limited number of the publishers and distributors examined seem to correspond with what is noted above.

According to the responses of publishers and distributors, neither the buying capacity nor the readiness on the part of private higher education institutions is encouraging.

Two organizations disclosed that their focus on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is limited because of factors like the lack of readiness on the part of PHEIs to spend on quality books, lack of capacity in specification preparations, and lack of capital allocated to book purchase. One publisher expressed his/her plan to go into the higher education market but noted that "the conditions are not yet fulfilled."

One should also note that even if there was the readiness and the financial muscle on the part of PHEIs, the existing publication and distribution industry does not seem to have the capacity to respond to such demands - by the admission of respondent organizations themselves.

Though they foresee the possible development, all respondents characterized the industry as immature, discouraging, and requiring serious attention. The major factors they identified as an impediment to the success of the industry are:

- high cost of publishing (due to taxes and duties);
- lack of capital and expertise;
- poor/low purchasing power of the population;
- low literacy rate and low reading culture;
- absence of commercial publishers; and
- unavailability of book policy and sound copy-right law.

In view of their existing problems, college heads and library chiefs were also asked to identify the strategies they used to cope with existing problems. The coping up strategies identified by college heads are shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Extent of Adopting Different Coping up Mechanisms**

Ser. No	Coping up Strategies	Extent of Adopting Coping up Strategies							
		Very Often		Often		Rarely		Never	
1.	Purchasing Books from Local Market*	11	42.3	11	42.3	3	11.5	-	-
2.	Purchasing Books from Abroad*	3	11.5	8	30.8	9	34.6	5	19.2
3.	Securing Donations**	1	5.5	3	11.5	12	46.2	7	26.9
4.	Photocopying/Duplicating Books*	12	46.2	11	42.3	2	7.7	-	-
5.	Using Materials Prepared by College Instructors*	2	7.7	5	19.2	17	65.4	1	3.8
6.	Getting Books through Exchange with Other Institution*	1	3.8	2	7.7	5	19.2	17	65.4

**Source: College Heads** \* One respondent didn't answer the question \*\* Three respondents didn't answer the question

As might be shown in the table, the most popular strategy used is photocopying or duplicating available books. An extensive use of photocopying is obviously an issue of concern for the publishing industry. Though a short term strategy, if not addressed it could eventually stifle the growth of the publishing and distribution trade by reducing the need for books.

It should also be noted that more helpful practices like exchange of books with other institutions, and material preparation by college instructors do not appear high on the list suggesting the practices of resource sharing schemes, and scholarly publishing are literally non-existent in PHEIs.

Among the coping up strategies identified, the response about donation which is regarded as the least used strategy is a bit surprising. This is because to the knowledge of the researcher, the institutions which reported the biggest acquisition obtained a significant portion of their books from Ethiopian Knowledge and Technology Transfer Society (EKTTS)- a local NGO committed to massive book derive. In a bid to check this, an attempt has been made to draw the difference

between the acquisition of five of the PHEIs (which have larger acquisitions) and the books donated by EKTTS to these same institutions. Table 8 shows the results obtained.

**Table 8: Comparisons of Donation and all other Modes of Books acquisition**

<i>Name of College</i>	<i>Books Available</i>	<i>Books Acquired from EKTTS</i>	<i>Difference (Books Acquired from all other sources)</i>	<i>Proportion from EKTTS</i>
College 1	19107	13882	5225	72.65
College 2	6000	3446	2554	57.43
College 3	18684	9028	9656	48.3
College 4	29367	13908	15459	47.36
College 5	15000	13737	1263	15.8

**Source: Data obtained from EKTTS and College Heads**

The above figures indicate that a substantial portion of the book acquisitions in the PHEIs comes from EKTTS suggesting that what has been obtained through other means is limited. The fact that donation is regarded as the least popular strategy may be explained in light with the mistaken belief of college heads who might have considered the processing fee they paid for donated books as purchase fee.

When asked about the use of additional alternatives in the acquisition of readable materials the library heads identified a few more choices. These alternatives are shown in Table 9 below.

**Table 9: Frequency of Use of Electronic Media by Private College Libraries (n = 26)**

<i>Ser. No.</i>	<i>Alternatives</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1	Don't use any	7	27
2	Use Internet only	9	34.6
3	Use both CD-ROMs and Internet	5	19.2
4	Use CD-ROMS only	6	23.1

**Source: College Library Heads (Multiple Response)**

Although the extent and pattern of using the suggested alternatives requires further research, the results in the above table indicate that PHEIs are exploring alternative routes to tackle their existing problems and/or to supplement current acquisitions. Whether the use of the electronic media is a challenge or prospect for textbook publication is also a question one might wish to ponder at least in the future.

### **3.3 What PHEIs View as Solutions for Existing Problems**

The third major objective of this research was to identify what college heads and chief librarians think to be the major ways of addressing their problems in textbook acquisition. The results are shown in Tables 10 and 11.

**Table 10: Multiple Responses on Solutions as Suggested by Private College Librarians**

Ser. No.	Suggested Solution	Mentioned as Solution	
		Frequency	Percentages
1	Government should equally make available books for PHEIs as it does for Public Higher Learning Institutions	5	19.2
2	Allow Private College Students to Use Libraries of Public Colleges/Universities	2	7.7
3	Make Price of Books Affordable	6	23.1
4	Facilitating by Concerned Bodies the Acquisition of Books by PHEIs through Donation	9	34.6
5	PHEIs should create link among themselves for book exchange and loan	11	42.3
6	PHEIs should allocate adequate budget for books procurement	13	23.1
7	Creating mechanisms for duplicating books	11	42.3

**Source: Library Heads**

As might be shown above, college librarians forwarded multiple solutions. The major concern for the librarians is the issue of creating linkage among PHEIs for book exchange and loan, and for creating a mechanism of duplicating and publishing books. For college librarians, short term solutions seem to be more important than long term and sustainable solutions like allocation of adequate budget for book procurement.

In order to identify the sense of urgency that might be attached to the use of the various solutions suggested, institution heads were also asked to put in order their solutions from priority 1 (Very Urgent and Highly Essential) to priority 3 (Not Urgent but Essential). The results are shown in Table 11 below.

**Table 11. Suggested Solutions in Terms of Level of Urgency by Private College Heads**

Ser. No	Suggested Solutions	Very Urgent and Highly Essential		Urgent and Essential		Not Urgent but Essential	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Allocating Enough Budget by Colleges**	11	61.11	5	27.8	2	11.1
2	Establishing Resource-Sharing Schemes among Private and Public Institutions**	8	44.4	9	50.0	1	5.5
3	Local Text Book Publications**	11	61.11	5	27.8	2	11.1
4	Securing Donations**	5	27.8	4	22.22	9	50.0
5	Encouraging College Instructors to Write Text Books**	6	33.3	9	50.0	3	16.7
6	Copying Books**	7	38.9	7	38.9	3	16.7
7	Government Support for Private Colleges to Acquire Textbook***	11	61.11	4	22.22	3	16.7

**Source: College Heads**

\*\* and \*\*\* Two and three respondents didn't answer the question respectively

Remark:

*f* stands for frequency, and

% stands for percentage values

Although the need for allocating enough budgets is high on the agenda for college heads, equally important are the need for local textbook publications and government support. What is listed 'very urgent' next to these solutions are the establishment of resource-sharing schemes among institutions and encouraging instructors to write textbooks. The priorities that the respondents identified are in line with what requires bringing sustainable development to the publication and distribution industry. The fact that they suggested strategies like local textbook publication might also indicate that the other strategies used are either short-term alternatives and/or supplements to what should be done.

On the other hand, under the column for 'not urgent but essential' we observe donations to be popular. This may be due to several reasons. One may be the difficulty of securing donations and importing acquired materials. The other could be the limited importance of such materials due to the impossibility of selecting what is to be donated.

#### **4. Conclusions**

This small research has shown that currently PHEIs have a limited resource of books. The acquisition process is highly demanding, and at times frustrating. Books are expensive. Even when the financial capacity is there, the books required are not usually available on the market. The publishing industry is just at its infancy stage and cannot answer current requirements both in the form of quantity and variety. Acquiring books from abroad has not been an easy matter for PHEIs. Since these institutions are mainly filled with young and inexperienced staff, material preparation cannot be expected to serve as a panacea for their quest for textbooks.

In conclusion, it should be noted that this research is exploratory in nature and does not claim to be exhaustive and conclusive. Although indicative and in some ways enlightening, a more detailed understanding of the area warrants further research.

#### **5. Recommendations**

With an increase in the higher education enrolment, the demands for books will obviously augment. This research has shown that these demands are already strongly felt and need to be addressed quickly. The following recommendations are made in light with the need to grapple with the existing and possibly ensuing problems. In this regard,

- 5.1. It is high time that Ethiopia has a national book policy that governs the development, printing and dissemination of books while providing favourable conditions for publishing

industries. Such a policy should clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned with the book sector. It should also provide a logical framework for collaboration between partners in the public and private sectors.

- 5.2. The textbook problem could be regarded as the missing link in Ethiopia's current higher education expansion program neither the problem nor the strategies for tackling the problem has been mentioned. Thus, the government should find ways of redressing the problem.
- 5.3. The ultimate goal of developing literate societies cannot be attained by addressing the issue of textbooks to the education sector only. Since the growth of the publishing and distribution industry is highly dependent on the existence of a literate society, book development projects that would generate a general desire for books, create appreciation of books, persuade people and the government to spend money on books should be widely initiated, supported, and rigorously practiced. The creation of public awareness about local publishing and distribution through book fairs, book prizes, etc should also be made.
- 5.4. The mechanisms for encouraging and supporting the growth of local publishing industry should be sought. This should be done by creating the necessary conditions for local industries to grow and for international publishers to be attracted. The latter need to be encouraged to invest on local book development as they have the experience, expertise and capital required. Measures tested and found successful elsewhere should be considered. This might include a gamut of incentives like fellowships, grants for research and travel, awards and prizes, tax concessions and relieves, easy terms of credit, etc. These measures require the involvement and commitment of the government. In the words of Altbach "Private publishing operates in the context of governmental policy".
- 5.5. National associations of writers, publishers, booksellers, librarians, etc should be established in order to work jointly in the improvement of the status-quo with regard to textbook publication and distribution.
- 5.6. Support for private higher education institutions in assisting their efforts of acquiring books both locally and from abroad should be made. Taxes levied on books should be scrapped; relevant donations should be quickly handled at customs, (and conditions for encouraging scholarly publications in higher education institutions should be created.)
- 5.7. Private higher education institutions should allocate a significant portion of their income to the acquisition of books, and should create resource sharing mechanisms among themselves and/or public institutions of higher learning in order to facilitate sharing the existing meagre resources, experiences and expertise in the area.

- 5.8. PHEIs should encourage scholarly publishing in their institutions by designing policies and arranging reward systems that motivate their staff to involve in material preparation.

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